3101

CHARGE

DELIVERED

TO THE CLERGY

OF THE

DIOCESE OF EXETER,

BY THE

RIGHT REVEREND

HENRY LORD BISHOP OF EXETER,

AT HIS TRIENNIAL VISITATION

IN THE

MONTHS OF AUGUST, SEPTEMBER, AND OCTOBER, 1836.

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THIS CHARGE,

PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,

IS DEDICATED

BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE FRIEND AND BROTHER,

H. EXETER.

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CHARGE,

&c. &c.

REVEREND BRETHREN,

IN meeting you again, after an interval of three years, I have, first, the gratifying duty of congratulating you on the improved tone of public feeling towards the Church, and us its ministers. Whatever of undue jealousy and distrust may have been manifested towards us three years ago—whatever of unreasonable and morbid anxiety for the most extensive changes in the ecclesiastical institutions of the country, may have then pervaded the great mass of the nation—we have now, by God's blessing, the happiness of seeing, that these feelings are confined, mainly, to those inveterate enemies of the Church, whom nothing but the ruin of the Church itself could satisfy; while the people at large are content to look—with solicitude, indeed, proportioned to the greatness of the subject under consideration—but with patience, with calmness, and with a readiness to find worthy of acceptance and approbation, whatever plan of Church Reform shall, after due reflection, and on sound principles, be proposed to them by proper authority.

Before I conclude my present address to you, I shall state frankly and openly my sentiments on some of the principal particulars of the plan which has been actually announced. But it may, I think, be better

that I should first treat of some other matters, which cannot but be highly interesting to all the members of the Church, particularly to its ministers.

In truth, the present year has been peculiarly prolific of matters of this description. Laws have been enacted—and others have been proposed and deferred—which have a very important bearing both on the temporal and on the spiritual interests of the Church.

I. And here let me first make a few brief remarks on that great change in the temporal relation between the clergy and the people, which has been effected by the Act for the Commutation of Tithes in England.

That I speak the unanimous sentiment of all who hear me, when I say that such a measure, supposing it to proceed on fair and equitable principles, has been long the sincere and anxious wish of the clergy, I have no doubt. Not only you, but all our brethren throughout the land, would rejoice with no ordinary joy, to see for ever extinguished those heart-burnings and jealousies, which a collision of the temporal rights of the clergy with the pecuniary interests of their people, are at all times too likely to enkindle. In the measure actually adopted by Parliament, I earnestly hope that we may see the accomplishment of this great object. Only, let the execution of the act proceed in the spirit of equity and justice—in other words, let the Commissioners be intelligent and honourable men, able and willing to carry *judicial* minds to the discharge of their trust—and you will not have reason, on your own account, to lament the forbearance which has so honourably distinguished the clergy throughout England in interposing no obstacle, not even a single petition, to the passing of a Bill

which was to adjust for ever their claims on that species of endowment, which, however scornfully it may be spoken of by politicians, as 'the institution of a barbarous age,' we will never forget that our Divine Master himself sanctioned for his ministers by the example of his own law.

I have said that you would not, on your own account, have reason to lament it: and I feel it my duty to state the reason, for which I have felt it necessary to insert this qualification. Harmless as the measure may be to the clergy of the present generation, that it will prove equally so to those who shall succeed us, I grieve to say, I cannot hope. To them, in the lapse of a very few ages, it can hardly fail to happen, that a great injustice will be found to have been committed—an alteration wrought in the comparative condition of the landowner and the clergyman, greatly to the injury of the latter. If it be said that the tithe-owner's interest is protected by the appointed corn-rents, thus making his income to vary with the variations of the times, I answer, that this gives no compensation whatever for his fair share in that augmentation of the produce of land, which shall be caused, not by any special and occasional employment of capital (from which, I am confident, you would gladly forego all share of benefit), but by the general advancement of agriculture as an art; by the discoveries of science, and the application of the results of those discoveries to the culture of the earth; by the introduction of new articles of produce; by the opening out of new communications, and thus facilitating an increased and more profitable cultivation, without any proportionate increase of expenditure. In all these common benefits, the boons of a gracious Providence to man, the owner of the soil has no

special right which can justify the shutting out the owner of the tithe of produce from his proportionate share. Let me illustrate my meaning by one or two brief references to notorious facts.

In the reign of King Henry VIII. a valuation, we know, was taken of all ecclesiastical benefices. At that time, the richest benefices now in the patronage of the Lord Chancellor were estimated at 20*l.* per annum; the price of wheat being 10*s.* per quarter. If, therefore, the commutation for tithe had then been made at a corn-rent, the largest and richest of these benefices, some of them now producing 800*l.* or 1000*l.* per annum and upwards, and having to maintain, by reason of their population, one or more assistants, as well as a resident incumbent, would have been valued at 40 quarters of wheat, which, at the present price of wheat, would make the income of these benefices to be only 80*l.* per annum.

If it be said, that this is an instance taken from a remote and rude period, scarcely admitting comparison with the actual state of things among us, I will refer to one of modern date, within the memory and experience of many of those who hear me. In the year 1792, the price of wheat was not materially different from that which it bears at present, yet the rent of land has at least been doubled since that time; and so has the income of clerical preferments. If, therefore, this act had passed in 1792, benefices would now have only half of their present income; and if a similar process continues (and no good reason I apprehend can be assigned why it should not continue), it will follow that in a half century from the present time the relative condition of the tithe owner and of the lord of the soil will be altered, in the proportion of one-half, to the disadvantage of the latter.

These considerations I felt it my duty, as a trustee for the Church, not only of the present but of future generations,—for the Church, I repeat, not for the clergy merely, but for the Church in its largest and truest sense, including the people, whose spiritual interests, and, so far as respects the poor among them, whose temporal interests, are involved in every thing which materially affects the endowment of their National Church,—these considerations, I say, I felt it my duty to state in Parliament, and to endeavour to found upon them some measure for securing the just rights of the Church in ages yet to come. Not having the good fortune to obtain support in this endeavour, I was compelled to abandon it without a struggle.

To revert to that which is now the only object of practical consideration,—the actual provisions of the new law. If these provisions are carried into effect, honourably and conscientiously, by all persons engaged in executing them, the existing clergy will suffer no diminution of temporal emoluments, while they will gain incalculably in the increased facility of harmonious and edifying intercourse with their parishioners. I am confident, therefore, that on your part there will be found no indisposition to enter cheerfully into negociations for an amicable and voluntary adjustment of your claims. In saying this, however, I shall not be deterred by the chance of uncandid misrepresentations of my words, from reminding you, that in these commutations you will be acting not merely for yourselves, but as trustees; and that on the faithfulness of each of you to his trust, will depend the permanent endowment of the Church in his own particular parish —its temporal means of spiritual usefulness through all future generations. Unhappily, the facts to which I have already referred prove that this act, even

under the fair execution of it, must inflict a heavy loss on your successors, and, in them, on the Church at large. No conscientious man among you, therefore, will feel himself at liberty to aggravate this necessary loss by consulting for his own ease, or by yielding to feelings in themselves amiable,—gratitude, for instance, to his patron, or a desire to conciliate the favour of his neighbours. No conscientious man, in short, will omit to bring forward every consideration which may justly be expected to raise the amount of compensation. For this compensation must, at the best, be very inadequate, taking into account the great advantage given to landlords, by releasing them from all obligation in respect to future improvement, however accruing.

II. I pass to other particulars in the legislation of the current year, which must have excited more than common interest in you.

Among these I will first remark on the bill entitled 'An Act for the better Regulation of Ecclesiastical Revenues, and the Promotion of Religious and Moral Instruction in Ireland:'—in plain English, for seizing on the revenues of the Protestant Church in Ireland, and applying them to some undefined purpose of teaching morality without religion, and religion without a creed.

On this Bill I shall be brief; but I cannot but congratulate you, on higher grounds than sympathy with your distressed and excellent brethren, the clergy of that country, that the cause of true religion has not been there abandoned; that those moderate funds (for such they have been proved to be) which the piety and wisdom of former ages have provided for the maintenance, and the extension, of a pure faith throughout Ireland, have not become the prey of a perfidious

faction, which could not have acquired the powers of mischief, which, unhappily, they possess and exercise, but by entering into engagements, and binding themselves by pledges, which Englishmen and Protestants would deem it impossible for any who call themselves Christians to dare to violate. In the discussion of the measure in Parliament, I felt it my duty to rest my resistance to it on this point—to denounce as treachery, aggravated by perjury, such an exercise of rights, acquired under an oath 'not to weaken or disturb the Protestant religion.' In truth, when we call to mind the solemn and oft-repeated protestations made by the Roman Catholics and by their friends for them,—of the sense in which they took that oath, and of the awful obligation imposed by it upon their conscience,—and then advert to the certain consequences of the proposed Bill, (if it had passed) as avowed by its chief adviser,—that it would prove a serious discouragement, a heavy blow to the Protestant religion, and a triumph to its enemies; but that it was a measure which the augmented force of the Roman Catholics, and their unmitigable hostility to that religion had rendered necessary:—when we call to mind, that such was the nature of the measure, such the argument by which it was enforced, I know not in what milder terms the indignation of an honest mind can be expressed, than by characterizing the conduct of those who demanded it, as treachery aggravated by perjury. No obloquy —however it may be attempted to heap obloquy on all who thus feel and thus proclaim their feeling—no violence of invective, from whatever quarter, and in whatever place, high or low, it may be uttered,—shall deter me from giving expression to similar indignation, so often as it shall be called forth by similar perfidy, exhibited in such a cause.

III. Among the most important legislative measures of the session, are, the Act for Registering Births, Deaths, and Marriages; and the Act for Marriages in England. I put them together, not because they are connected in their own nature, but because they are declared to be one Act by the legislature. The former is become comparatively harmless, since the unchristian provision, originally introduced into the Bill, for the naming the child before baptism, has been withdrawn. The other Act, I grieve to say, contains matter, which, but a few years ago, it would have been deemed impossible to induce a British legislature to place in the statute book, and which hardly any sane person would then have had the hardihood even to propose. I say nothing of the provisions for guarding against clandestine matrimony; though we can hardly believe that such provisions were seriously designed for such a purpose; but I dwell not on them,—for they relate to a matter which belongs to the State rather than to the Church, and, as such, is not especially connected with the occasion on which we are here assembled. But I refer to the clauses relating to all marriages which shall not actually be celebrated within the walls of a church—marriages which, be it remembered, may hereafter be contracted by *all* persons whomsoever, by churchmen as well as by dissenters. No distinction is expressed—none is necessarily implied. The very name of dissenters is cautiously excluded from the Act: its object, as announced in the preamble, is not to give relief to dissenters, (that, it seems, would derogate from the dignity of dissent,) but to amend the law of marriages in England; and the effect of this amendment of our marriage law is as follows:—All may now marry with equal validity, and with equal favour in the eye of the law, whether they solemnize

their marriage in the house of God, or in the office of the clerk of the guardians of the poor:—whether they call God to witness their plighted faith, or own no higher sanction than the presence of one of the lowest public functionaries known to the State. Matrimony itself is degraded, so far as the act of a mortal legislature can degrade it, from a holy ordinance of God, to a simple contract between two human beings, beginning and ending with their own bare agreement—no recognition of the sacredness, much less of the indissolubility of the contract—no blessing sought—no vows of mutual fidelity given and received—nothing, in short, which can hallow, or honour, or endear, that union, which is declared by an apostle to be a type and figure of Christ's own blessed union with his spouse the Church.

More than one attempt was made to prevent this lamentable result, securing, at the same time, what the authors of the Bill professed to be its sole object, though they refused to admit it into the preamble,—relief to the dissenters. Especially, it was proposed, as an expedient which might satisfy the views of all parties, that the State, leaving the marriage law unaltered, so far as it respects members of the Church, should allow all persons who are not of the Church, to contract matrimony in whatsoever manner their consciences might approve, provided it were done in their places of divine worship, and attested by the subscription of the parties, and of the registrar. But this was objected to, for a reason which will not readily occur to men of plain understanding; though, unhappily, through that bane of our times, a spurious political expediency, it was adopted, or yielded to, by some from whom better things might have been expected. The reason was as follows. It seems that

there are some persons whose conscience is so very tender, that it would be wounded by going to any place of divine worship, at least for the purpose of marriage; and in deference to the scruples of these very refined spirits, it was deemed (or statesmen were found who professed to deem it) only just and proper, to set at nought all the conscientious objections of all those homelier minds, which could not but be shocked by witnessing such an outrage on an institution which has always hitherto, in this country, been regarded as sacred. I say, *always hitherto.* For even in the days of the Great Rebellion, when there was no king in our Israel, and when we know, from the writings and example of Milton, that very loose notions prevailed of the binding nature of the matrimonial contract, still a religious form was, even then, scrupulously preserved. Englishmen, in short, were never, before this year, invited to enter into matrimony with as little solemnity, as if they were engaging in some partnership in trade, or bargain of convenience. Even now, be it our consolation to think better of the people of this land, than their rulers appear to think. The feelings and principles of Englishmen (let us humbly thank God for it!) are not yet brought down so low, as this degrading and corrupting law would seem to contemplate. They will spurn the boon thus thrust upon them. All honest persons, certainly all honest women, will avail themselves of the option which is yet left to them, and will adhere to the religious rite. They will refuse to become parties to the desecration of that holy ordinance, on which all the sanctity of our homes and hearths, all the charities, and even the decencies, of domestic life depend—that ordinance which alone, under God, has rescued man from the brutal state to which his appetites would otherwise

reduce him; alone has given to woman her true rank and dignity in life, as the help-meet of man, the soother of his sorrows, the partner of his joys, the chastener of his earthly affections, the fellow-heir of his hopes of heaven *.

IV. I turn to the measures of Church Reform, which have been in part made the law of the land, and in part stand over for the deliberations of another year.

The first description indeed applies only to one measure—the "Act for carrying into effect the Reports of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, so far as they relate to Episcopal Dioceses, Revenues, and Patronage." The result of what is therein accomplished may be thus briefly summed up:—The revenues of the bishops are so far equalized, by contributions to be made from the richer to the poorer sees, as to render commendams in future unnecessary, and almost to supersede the practice of translations from one diocese to another. These are objects on which, in my last address to you, I ventured to express my own hearty concurrence in the course now taken by the Commissioners; and here, with a renewed expression of this feeling, I should be content to leave the matter, if, unhappily, the Act, which has recently passed, had not contained other provisions, which, wholly unnecessary

* Hear St. Peter, himself a married man—"Ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, *they also may, without the word, be won by the conversation of the wives;* while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, *giving honour unto the wife*, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." —1 Peter iii. 1, 2, 7.

for the attainment of its professed objects, are pregnant, or seem to be pregnant, with the most disastrous consequences to the Church of England, as an Established Church.

In my judgment, it would have been sufficient, and, if sufficient, it must have been much more expedient, to treat this measure as a final measure. I cannot recognize the wisdom of a scheme which makes the revenues of the Church to be a subject of perpetual scrutiny, and invites its enemies to never-ceasing speculation on the best means of accomplishing its downfal. Already has the creation of the Commission, and the sanction of Parliament necessary to its recommendations, been hailed as a recognition of the right of the legislature to interfere at pleasure, not merely in the regulation of the revenues of the clergy, but with those revenues themselves. Surely, to provide for a septennial revision of these matters is not the best expedient for securing the permanence and stability of our Establishment itself. At any rate, it might have been expected, that, if such a revision were deemed indispensable, nothing further would be done than might be necessary to effect it. A Commission, therefore, for this specific object, to be renewed from time to time, when necessary, was the obvious, and would have seemed the most reasonable, expedient. But this is not the course which has been followed. A machinery of the most formidable and portentous nature has been created, threatening us with a series of changes in our ecclesiastical constitution, so often as the convenience of any government, which may be dependent on the will or caprices of a faction hostile to the Church, shall dictate such changes.

That I do not exaggerate the danger will, I think, be manifest, on a very slight examination of this part

of the Act. Instead of a commission, there is created a perpetual corporation, to be called by the name of 'The Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England;' a denomination taken from the ill-omened precedent of a similar body corporate—'The Ecclesiastical Commissioners for Ireland'—created three years ago, by an Act, of which the first minister of the Crown has recently admitted and proclaimed, that no one in his senses could doubt that it was a discouragement of the Protestant cause in that unhappy country. But let this pass. Not only is a perpetual body corporate created for managing these affairs of the Church—a matter in itself of fearful danger, as inviting to a perpetual and mischievous activity in managing—but the composition of this body proceeds on a principle (if a principle it may be called) never before witnessed in the construction of any corporation known to the laws of this land, save that disastrous precedent to which I have already referred. In short, the great majority of this members of the body, more than three-fourths, are removable at the pleasure of the Crown*. Thus is the very end and object, for which corporations are ordinarily created, permanence and independence, practically defeated. Three only of its members, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and the Bishop of

* It is worth remarking, that the making this Commission a *perpetual* corporation, and its members removable at the pleasure of the Crown, is in direct opposition to the very recent precedent of the statutes which constitute the Commission for Building Churches, and empowering his Majesty to name the Commissioners. That Commission was to continue in force for ten years, unless his Majesty shall think fit sooner to alter or revoke the same. (It has since been continued for ten years longer.) The Commissioners are declared to be a body corporate, while any Commission appointing such Commissioners shall continue in full force; and his Majesty is authorized, when and so often as any *vacancies shall arise by death, resignation, or otherwise*, to supply any such vacancy by the appointment of any other person.

London, hold their places for life; the remaining ten, two of them bishops, are removable at pleasure by the King in Council: in other words, by the minister of the day.

But this is not all. The framers of this body corporate have greatly improved on their Irish precedent, in constructing it for the easy handling of the political mechanist. The corporation of 'Ecclesiastical Commissioners for Ireland' consists of only eleven members, six of whom are archbishops and bishops (being one-half of the Irish prelates), two laymen, the Lord Chancellor, and the Lord Chief Justice of Ireland, and three others (one of them to be appointed by the two Archbishops), either lay or clerical, as it shall happen; one of these is, in fact, a clergyman. Thus it will be seen, that of the Irish body two members only are necessarily laymen, and these the two highest judges in the land; whereas of the English Commissioners, thirteen in number, five only are Archbishops or bishops, (not one-fifth of the English prelates,) five are cabinet ministers, and the remaining three all necessarily laymen, and all to be appointed and removed at the pleasure of the Crown. Thus, in the English body, there is a standing majority of ministers and lay nominees of ministers, against the Episcopal Commissioners (two of whom are also nominees of ministers), in the proportion of eight to five. As some semblance of security against abuse, provision is made that the Seal shall never be affixed to any instrument, unless in the presence of two of the Episcopal Commissioners; nor then, if both of them object. In every case, however, if a single Bishop assents, though all the other four object, the act may be ratified. If, therefore, the minister shall at any time be able to find, or to make, a single Bishop of the English bench subservient to his views, he has only

to place him among the Commissioners, and the whole *direction* of the powers of this body is at this minister's absolute disposal. If it be said that these powers affect the Church only in a few particulars, and those of a kind not especially calling for suspicion and jealousy, I answer, that they already extend further than may at first appear. Already, for instance, the Commissioners can recommend the seizure of all the lands and revenues of every see as it shall fall, making the successor in it to be a mere stipendiary; and what they recommend becomes the law of the land, when approved by his Majesty in Council: in other words, what the minister of the day shall carry by his standing majority among the Commissioners becomes law, so soon as the same minister shall approve it, by those members of the Privy Council whom he shall himself select and summon to Council for the purpose.

But to state the particular provisions of this Act would be to give a very inadequate representation of the dangers involved in it. Its chief mischief (little as this could have been intended by some of its authors) is, that a depository of power, a permanent, a perpetual depository of power, is thus created, and placed under the control of the minister of the day, to which all the concerns of the Church may gradually be drawn. In the 4th Report we see announced a vast enlargement of the operations of this body; and every passing year will probably be marked by some fresh accessions, until the country shall be accustomed to see it invested with attributes, compared with which the highest authority over the Church, claimed by the Tudors or the Stuarts, will appear powerless and insignificant.

Meanwhile, even in one of the very earliest acts of these Commissioners, we see an instance of the beset-

ting sin of all such bodies, a proneness to extend their own powers, a mischievous latitude and laxity in construing the terms in which their trust is confided to them; a violation, in short, of both the letter and the spirit of the Commission under which they act. This, I am aware, is a strong assertion, and requires to be sustained by proof.

One of the three great purposes of the Commission is declared to be 'for considering the state of the several Cathedral and Collegiate Churches, with a view to the suggestion of such measures as may render them *most conducive to the efficiency of the Established Church.*' This is all that the Commissioners are required, all that they are empowered, to do, in this important particular. But in the exercise of this power, they recommend that 'a portion of the revenues of the Dean and Chapter of Durham shall be applied towards the important object of maintaining, in a state of respectability and efficiency, the University of Durham.'

Now, whether such an appropriation be in itself justifiable, and, if justifiable, whether, in the present state of this country, when millions of our brethren are without a Church and without a Clergyman, it be also wise and proper, are questions which I will not discuss (avowing, however, my own conviction, that it would be very unwise and very improper): but be this as it may, I wave these considerations, and only contend that the Commissioners have no right whatever, under the terms of their Commission, to make any such proposition; that they have no more right to recommend the diversion of the property of Deans and Chapters to the maintenance of an University, than to the maintenance of an hospital or a rail-road. And, if I had any doubt on this point, that doubt would be

removed by the words in which, at the outset, the Commissioners themselves have stated their own view of their own powers and duties. For after citing that part of the Commission given above, which relates to Cathedral and Collegiate Churches, they thus continue:—

'In approaching this branch of the inquiry, we think it important to explain *the principles upon which we have proceeded.* In order to give increased efficiency and usefulness to the Established Church, it is obviously necessary that we should attempt the accomplishment of two objects, which are indispensable to the complete attainment of that end. One is, to improve the condition of those benefices, the population of which is of considerable amount, but which are now so scantily endowed as not to yield a competent maintenance for a Clergyman. The other is, to add to the numbers of Clergymen and Churches, and *so* to make a more adequate provision for the religious instruction of a rapidly increased and increasing population.'

Nothing surely can be more sound and judicious than the principles thus laid down. But how the recommendation of an augmented endowment of a new University can be truly said to have proceeded from those principles—how such a measure forwards the accomplishment of either of the 'two objects' declared to be 'indispensable,'—how it tends to improve the income of small benefices in populous parishes, or 'adds to the numbers of Clergymen and Churches for the religious instruction' of the manufacturers of Lancashire or the miners of Cornwall, is past my ability to comprehend. According to all ordinary reasoning, the abstraction of a large portion of means, which, at the best, are very inadequate to the end

proposed, would seem to make 'the complete attainment of that end' not merely more remote, but absolutely hopeless.

Even this, however, is not the worst consequence of the measure thus recommended. The principle involved in it—the precedent which it establishes—is incalculably more mischievous than the measure itself. For if the Commissioners of 1836 are allowed to apply the revenues of the Chapter of Durham to the maintenance of the University of Durham, why may not the Commissioners of 1837 apply the revenues of the Chapter of London to the maintenance of the University of London?

Several excellent distinctions between the two cases may, I doubt not, be given, every one of which might perhaps be quite convincing to you and me. But this, unhappily, is of no consequence: the real question is, will they be equally convincing to any Minister of the Crown, who may chance to care very little for the Church, and very much for the support of some infidel faction, who shall insist on his following, in their favour, the precedent with which in an evil hour these Commissioners will have armed them?

But I revert to the Act which constitutes the Commission a perpetual Corporation, and makes them removable at the pleasure of the Crown. That such a measure, containing such provisions, would be resisted by that House of Parliament which, on all other recent occasions, has shown itself most jealous of established rights, and most determined in vindicating the ancient institutions of the country, it was natural to expect. Unhappily, the real issue has been very different. Every section of every political party was found to vie with each other in deference to the high authority which recommended the Bill:

the number of opponents, even of its most obnoxious clauses, was incredibly small: but among them, it may be satisfactory to state, were all the English bishops, not being members of the Commission, who were able to protract their attendance in Parliament to so late a period.

And here, in connexion with this matter, I may be permitted (I will not say to complain, but) to lament, that the bishops, who, both for themselves and for the Church, were so deeply interested in the bill, were not allowed even to see it, much less to state any objections to it, before it was introduced into Parliament. Had this been done, it is not credible, it is not possible, that its most dangerous provisions would have been suffered to remain in their present state; as it was, the bill being first introduced into the House of Commons, and having there received one of its worst changes—that which made the Commissioners removable at the pleasure of the Crown, *avowedly for the purpose of making them more dependent on that House*—when it reached the Lords, but little hope was presented, and so we were expressly told, of effecting any amendment, without insuring the ultimate rejection of the bill itself. For the Minister who had introduced it into the House of Commons, is represented to have declined to press the measure in any form which should render it unacceptable to a certain portion of his adherents.

In deference to the same party, the other bill, which was to carry into effect the other recommendations of the Commissioners, extending to ecclesiastical duties and revenues in general, has been absolutely withdrawn; and the Church is left in that state of anxiety, which must follow the announcement of great changes, suspended without any satisfactory cause,

I should rather say, suspended in avowed submission to the objections of those who are most hostile to the very existence of the Church.

Good, however, may yet be the issue of this delay, if, in the mean time, the measure to be proposed shall experience more deliberate consideration from the friends of the Church in general, than could have been given to it, had it been brought into Parliament at the time and in the manner which seems to have been intended.

V. In looking at the Reports of the Commissioners, while I sincerely honour the wisdom which has dictated many of their recommendations, it will not, I hope, be deemed presumptuous if I withhold my assent from others, especially from some of those which relate to Archdeacons, and to Deans and Chapters.

These particulars are, in part, connected in the Report, for it seems, that in every cathedral one stall is to be bestowed on an archdeacon, charged with a payment to some other archdeacon, so as to make up the income of the latter to a sum not exceeding 200*l.* per annum. Now, this arrangement seems to me peculiarly objectionable; inasmuch as it reduces the income of the stall assigned to an archdeacon, below that of the other canonries. Surely, the officer of highest dignity and authority, of the greatest labour and usefulness, after the bishop, ought not to be thus placed in a worse condition, than the other members of the chapter to which he belongs. I would much rather see every archdeacon a member of the chapter; in other words, I would much rather see so many canonries, as there are archdeacons, charged with the duties of archdeacon,—duties, I need not say, of a

very important kind. This would, I submit, make the utility of these establishments more manifest, and would itself go far towards enforcing the appointment of proper persons to fill them.

But let us see a little of the operation of the measure proposed by the Commissioners. For this purpose, I will take the cases of an archdeacon of the diocese of Exeter, and one of the diocese of London.

The archdeacon of Cornwall has a district to superintend of a hundred miles in length. In this wide field, more extensive than more than one entire diocese, he has not merely the ordinary cares of an archdeacon; for, by reason of his bishop being resident in the other much larger portion of the diocese, increased vigilance and attention are requisite on his part. One obvious consequence is, considering the number and extent of his necessary journeys, and other occupations, that he must have a curate to assist him in the care of his own parish. But for his services as archdeacon, he is to receive 'a sum not exceeding 200*l.* per annum,' half of which, at least, must be given to his curate, leaving to himself 100*l.* per annum for labours, which no man of ordinary powers of body is able to perform, and none but a man of more than ordinary vigour of mind is fit to be charged with.

Meanwhile, the archdeacon of London, with comparatively few duties, and those of the easiest kind, lying almost at his very door, is to receive a remuneration of 1200*l.* or 1300*l.* per annum.

Now, that to a Bishop of London should be assigned an income more than twice as ample, as to a Bishop of Exeter, I readily admit to be very reasonable: for the former fills a station of higher dignity, demanding higher qualifications, and bringing with it the neces-

sity of a more costly establishment. But, why an archdeacon of London should receive twelve times the stipend, with less than a twelfth part of the labour, care, or responsibility, of an archdeacon of Cornwall, and with no higher demands of qualification or expenditure, is not quite so intelligible; and when I witness such an inequality, an inequality not arising out of the casualties of time or the incidents of property, but voluntarily created by the Commissioners themselves, in new-modelling our Establishment, it requires more than all my confidence in their wisdom, and deference to their authority, to make me acquiesce in the propriety of this part of their plan.

Again, as to the recommendation of the fixed number of four canons in every chapter, I would say, that to prescribe any certain number as that which will suit every cathedral and every see, seems to be a marvellously inartificial, and if I were not withheld by respect for those who have proclaimed the opinion, I should add, a marvellously injudicious view of the matter. If, indeed, attendance on the service of the cathedral were the sole, or the most important, duty of a canon, I should readily assent to the principle, that the same number would be sufficient in every instance, and that four, or three, or even two, might be enough. But I must take leave to say, that to look only to the service of the cathedral, is a very narrow view of the usefulness of this part of our Establishment. It has other very important services to render both to the Church at large, and to the particular diocese, and to the particular city, in which the chapter may be placed.

To the Church at large our cathedrals afford the inestimable benefit (as has been proved by experience) of nourishing men of talents and learning, fitting them

to be the defenders of 'the faith which was once delivered to the saints,' and to transmit it pure and undefiled to succeeding generations. They afford a gradation of clerical stations, which no one who knows what is in man will lightly estimate. They thus accommodate the Church to the state of society at large, and enable it to adapt its ministrations and its influence most usefully to the people, for whose edification it is designed. To the particular diocese the cathedral establishment serves, or ought to be made to serve (and no restrictions would, for this purpose, seem to me too strong), as a means of rewarding distinguished merit; of doing honour to whom honour is due; of bringing the ablest men to be a standing council to the bishop; and to be a central point of communication and consultation for the whole diocese. To the particular city, it supplies the means of chastening and elevating the tone of social intercourse; of instilling, by example and practice, those principles and feelings which are most in accordance with the sacred profession of clergymen, and the liberal pursuits of scholars. It affords, too, judicious and considerate managers in the various charities of the place, and in directing into the most useful channels those streams of bounty, which the liberal spirit of British commerce is ever ready to send forth.

I speak not the language of theory, but from experience and observation. The great and flourishing city in which I live, the capital of this diocese, affords a practical illustration of the truth of what I say. To the residence within it of a body of men, qualified as the members of a chapter must ordinarily be, that city has been largely indebted; and the best and soundest part of its inhabitants are ever ready to avow their con-

viction of this truth. The habits, the sentiments, the pursuits, the attainments of an elevated order of clergy, whose very profession insures, both in themselves and in those with whom they associate, at least external homage to virtue and religion, cannot but be a most active and powerful ingredient in forming the general character and manners of such a place.—But a chapter of four is assumed to be sufficient for not only Exeter, but 'for all the churches both of the old and of the new foundation;' it being 'the establishment at present actually existing in the cathedrals of York, Chichester, and Carlisle *.' In other words, what is enough for either of our smallest cities and dioceses (such as Chichester and Carlisle), must also be enough for one of the largest; and if four places of honour are enough to reward distinguished merit in a diocese having two or three hundred clergy, they must be enough for one having much more than twice that number!

'But York is as large as Exeter, and the cathedral of York has only four canons.' Now, if the chapter of York exercises the same beneficial influence on the society of that city, and enjoys the same consideration as the chapter of Exeter, the case is in point, and proves that, in this respect, four canons are sufficient; if it does not (and I believe that it does not), then this case proves the insufficiency of that number. But will those who see, in the residence of such a body in a great city, a very important benefit to the moral and intellectual character of its inhabitants, will they be content that the continuance of such a benefit shall depend on any thing so unsatisfactory as a wild guess

* Second Report of His Majesty's Commissioners.

at the comparative influence of one chapter, or another, on the manners or pursuits of the city in which it is placed?

With regard to Exeter, I am bound to state further, that the continuance of our chapter in its present fulness of numbers is the more necessary, because the bishop has not the same means of rewarding merit, as is afforded in many other dioceses, by preferments of large value. There is no benefice, I believe, in my patronage having a clear income which exceeds 500*l.* per annum.

For all these reasons, I would gladly hope that the number of the members of the chapter of Exeter may be permitted to remain as it is, whatever portion of its revenues it may be required to contribute to the great objects contemplated in the proposed plan—the augmentation of poor benefices in populous parishes, and the supply of churches and clergymen in districts which need them. Those objects can hardly be too highly estimated; and I would gladly, therefore, see such a modification of the plan, as, leaving in all cases which may require it the present complement of canons, should derive an equal aid from chapters to the funds of the Commissioners.

It is satisfactory to me to be enabled to state, with reference to this matter, that it will be found, on inspection of the Appendix to the Second Report of the Commissioners, that if all the existing chapters were allowed to retain their present number of members, leaving the income of every dean 1000*l.* and of every canon 500*l.* per annum, as large a sum would be obtained for the purposes proposed in the Commission, without diminishing the numbers of this important branch of our Establishment. It is true that this could be effected only by an equalizing pro-

cess; but objection to such a process could hardly be made by those who have already unsparingly (but, I believe, wisely) applied it to the incomes of bishops. Such a plan might admit of modifications, in order to adapt it to the cases of different chapters; for I am very far from wishing to see the same rule applied to all. Indeed, it has from the first appeared to me a great and glaring mistake in the scheme recommended by the Commissioners, that it deals with all cases as if they were alike, and makes no allowance whatever for the differences, which different dioceses must necessarily present. Yet I remember well, that when Lord Grey's Government requested the bishops to deliberate on the wisest measures for making chapters available to the purposes of our Established Church, it was unanimously agreed among us, that no one plan ought to be applied to all; and every bishop undertook to consider, and prepare himself to represent, how the actual constitution of his own chapter could be best modified and made most efficient. A recollection of this unanimous agreement could not fail to increase the astonishment, with which I read this part of the Report.

In truth, in thus communicating with you, my Reverend Brethren, on a matter of so great common interest to all among us, and on which every rank and class of clergy have a right to expect that their feelings and judgment should be allowed their due weight, I must not permit my veneration, great as it is (and too great it can hardly be), for the most venerable names in the Commission, to deter me from stating, that I think one great error has influenced their whole proceeding, and has impaired the usefulness of almost every part of it. There is not enough (indeed there is hardly any thing) of adaptation to the special wants

and circumstances of the several dioceses. There is very little of local appropriation, and no local administration of the funds acquired. All is marked by what most of the wisest men around us consider to be the vice of modern legislation—all is 'centralization,' as it is called; a word not more strange to our language, than the practice, which it indicates, is foreign to our ancient habits and feelings. London, in short, is made to be all in all. In the present instance, one Board, seated in London, and composed of men, some of whom, and those the best qualified by experience, will necessarily be often, and for many months together, absent in the discharge of their own high duties as bishops, while a large portion of the remainder must be mainly occupied by their cares as statesmen—this one Board, practically reduced to those few members, whose other duties are confined to London, would have to regulate, in several most important particulars, the concerns of every diocese in England. Surely this ought not to be.

I will illustrate my argument in a single particular. There is a class of parishes, scattered throughout England—Tiverton is one of them—in which there are more than one clergyman, charged with the spiritual care of the whole parish. The consequence is, that parishes, so circumstanced, instead of being benefited by this abundant supply of pastors, really lose some of the greatest benefits, which are derived from having a known and fixed spiritual instructor. It was submitted to the Board, and a bill was presented for the purpose, that the bishop should be empowered, in all such cases, to assign special duties to every one of these incumbents; so that each parish, according to its circumstances, should have the full benefit of the services of all. This would have left the arrangement to that

authority which the constitution of the Church recognizes as fittest to decide upon it—namely, the bishop of the diocese. But this has not seemed to the Commissioners so desirable a course, as to bring the matter, in every case, to the decision of the Board in London. Power is to be given to them, to separate or consolidate portions of these benefices, 'or to make such other arrangements as may promote the efficient discharge of pastoral duties in such parishes.' These are the very words of the Fourth Report, describing, as I need hardly remark to you, one of the most important of the peculiar duties of a bishop within his diocese—a duty, I must take leave to add, which so belongs to the bishop of every diocese, as to exclude all others, even bishops, from intermeddling in it. Now, that the power, thus assumed by the Board, would be exercised in all cases with great impartiality, and with great ability, is unquestionable; but that it would be exercised with equal usefulness, as by persons of inferior endowments accurately acquainted with the circumstances of each case, I must be permitted to doubt; above all, I have no doubt, and you, I am confident, will agree with me in the declaration, that to thrust aside the bishop of the diocese, in a matter of immediate and close connexion with the essential rights and duties of his office—to leave him no voice in the decision—nay, to make his being at all consulted in the question to depend on the good pleasure of a Board sitting in London, and consisting mainly of laymen—is really such a violation of the first principles of episcopal government, in other words, of the constitution of the Church, as was never before hazarded in this or in any other branch of that Church. It is little short of putting the episcopacy of the Church of England into commission.

I have thus, as I promised at the outset, stated frankly to you my opinion on some of the principal particulars of the plan of Church Reform, set forth in the Reports of the Commissioners. In doing this, if I have spoken freely, I hope I have not spoken offensively. To say of a scheme devised by a body of men, the great majority of whom, however highly gifted, can have little practical knowledge of the matters on which they were to advise—to say of such a scheme, that in several important particulars it appears to have greatly failed, is no reproach to those of whose labours it is spoken. Again, with regard to the venerable minority of the Board, well acquainted, as they are, with the subjects of their deliberations, and eminently qualified, as they are, to advise upon them—to say of them, even though guided by the ablest and most judicious, as he is the most exalted, of our order,—by one whom I would never name without honour, nor think of without reverence,—that they, nevertheless, appear to me to have not always succeeded in giving a right direction to the deliberations of their colleagues, amidst the numerous details of a large and complicated inquiry, is surely not inconsistent with sincere and great respect for them. They will, I am confident, do me the justice of remembering, that I too am bound to feel, and to testify, an interest, ardent as is their own, in what concerns the Church, in which, with far humbler faculties indeed, I hold a similar station with themselves; and that, in thus visiting and addressing my clergy, at a season big with mighty results, whether for good or evil, to the best interests of that Church, I should ill discharge my duty, if I shrunk from an open avowal of my honest and deliberate judgment on the important matters which have been forced on our attention.

VI. Another legislative measure of the present year, is the Bill 'to abridge and regulate the holding of Benefices in Plurality, and to amend the laws relating to the Residence of the Clergy.' Upon this measure, I feel it my duty to state to you my opinion without reserve, unpopular as it may be.

That non-residence of the incumbent, and plurality of benefices, are in themselves deformities on the face of our ecclesiastical polity, I am quite ready to admit. In practice, I have not shown myself a friend to either of them; for, as a bishop, I have always, as you well know, laboured to enforce residence in every case in which it appeared to me consistent with justice or fitness to enforce it; and, as a patron, out of twenty benefices which have fallen to my disposal, I have never given one to be held in plurality. Still, in the existing state of things—a state which I should rejoice to see amended—I cannot be insensible to (I had almost said) the necessity of tolerating both practices, non-residence and pluralities, while they are kept within reasonable bounds: and I much fear that serious practical evils will be found to ensue from any law, which may attempt to carry the restraints much further than they operate already. In truth, I anticipate very great mischief from the new measure, if it become a law, when it shall have had time to develope its real character. For the present, and for a long while to come, as it leaves existing interests untouched, its operation may not be much felt. But when it shall have come fully into action, I am greatly afraid, that in making our machinery more sightly, we shall have spoiled it for use. I fear, in short, that the system will be found to work very ill. Indeed, if the principle were carried to the utmost extent of which it is capable, and to which many well-meaning Church

reformers profess to look as their legitimate aim—that is, if *every* incumbent were compelled to be resident on his benefice, and no benefices whatever were held in plurality, the effect, in the present state of Church patronage (for *there* the main difficulty lies), would be a degree of hardship to individuals, and of mischief to the Church, which would be absolutely intolerable. For, how would it be possible to supply places of probation and occupation for the clergy, at the outset of their clerical life? Let me illustrate my meaning by reference to facts. In this diocese there are in all more than 100 curates of benefices held in plurality, and only 90 assistants of resident incumbents. There are, also, about 50 curates of parishes whose incumbents are non-resident for other causes, half of whom would not be permitted to be non-resident under the proposed bill. It is evident, therefore, that considerably more than half of the present places of probation for young clergymen, and for their instruction in the practical duties of their sacred function, would be extinguished, if this bill should become the law of the land. I repeat my question, therefore, how would occupation be found for the clergy at the outset of their clerical life?

In order to answer the question, let us see how the matter must work.—Two-thirds of our benefices are in the gift of lay-patrons. By much the largest portion of these are designed for sons or relatives of the patrons, or of those who have obtained the next presentation. These future incumbents are, as they ought to be, educated with a view to their future position. But the benefice will not fall at the time when the expectant is ready for it, often not for many years afterwards. What is he to do in the mean while? Oh! we shall be told, let him, as at present,

be content with a curacy. But where will he find one? Even at present, the difficulty, as you all well know, is sometimes very great, and is every day increasing. What, then, I must again and again ask, is the young man to do? Is he to be an idler on the world? or is he to fit himself for his future duties by employing the intermediate time in the army, or the counting-house, or some other secular occupation? I leave the question to answer itself.*

But the expectants of benefices in private patronage are not the only persons interested in the matter—there is another class, for whom I have a much stronger feeling, and whose claims, on consideration, are of a much higher order—I mean those young men, who, without friends or patrons, are induced, by their own piety and zeal for God's honour, to seek to enter

* It may be worth stating, what is the state of things, in this respect, in Scotland, where neither non-residence of incumbents, nor plurality of benefices, is tolerated.

The aspirants to holy orders there, after they have perfected their theological course of education in the University, and undergone a long and satisfactory examination, are constituted by the presbytery, probationers, or licentiates. They are not ordained, they are only licensed; the effect of their licence being to enable them to preach, and to visit pastorally. Their ordination does not take place till they obtain a nomination to a parish, which, on the average, does not happen in less than six or eight years after their licence. Meanwhile, they maintain themselves as they can. Some few are assistants to such incumbents as need assistance, and these commonly obtain a spare subsistence in return. Some are engaged as tutors in families, others as village schoolmasters. There is nothing to prevent their quitting their course of life, and giving themselves altogether to lay pursuits and business—and they would not forfeit their licence save by immorality. They would, however, have to encounter a scandalized feeling, if their occupation were any other than one connected with education.

It is needless for me to say, that this course could not be adopted in our Church, for such a licence, given to laymen, would be contrary to our doctrine, no less than to our discipline. But the practice of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland shows in what serious difficulties we might be involved by adopting their discipline in entire prohibition of non-residence and pluralities.

into holy orders, and who, if admitted, must depend solely on their own merit for a future provision. What will be the prospects of such persons? For the most part they will find the door of *entrance* barred against them, and the Church must be content to lose the services of these, in many cases, her best ministers: nay, often I fear, will see them carry their talents and energies, to swell the ranks and increase the influence of schismatical dissent.

But let us suppose, that some will still gain admittance as assistants to the resident incumbents. How are they to get on? At present, they recommend themselves to their bishops or other patrons, by their zeal and success in the management of the parishes intrusted to them as curates. But in the golden age, which is to arise upon us, and in which almost every parish is to have its own incumbent resident—no parishes, or almost none, will be intrusted to curates—and the unfriended expectant will have no mode of developing his full powers of usefulness; while his merits, even as an assistant, will be little known beyond the limits of his parish; and must depend for their recommendation, not merely on the will, but also on the power, the influence, the manners, in short, the innumerable shades of character or situation of the principal, which may make him more or less inclined, or able, to promote the interests of his subordinate.

Meanwhile, the stipends of assistants will be, and must be, miserably small; much smaller than of curates of parishes, where the incumbents are non-resident. In this diocese, where, low as the average income of benefices is, the average stipend of curates and assistants is higher than in any other diocese except three, and these the richest, there are only

thirty, out of the whole number of ninety assistants, whose income amounts to 100*l.* per annum; of nearly fifty, the stipend does not exceed 60*l.* per annum. Nor will the income of the benefices themselves admit of these stipends being raised, where the incumbents are resident. How, then, is the class of poor and unfriended clergymen, however meritorious, to obtain subsistence, under a system which would reduce the great majority of them to such a pittance?

For these reasons, I felt it my duty to object, in part, to the bill of which I am speaking, though it came recommended by the high authority of his Majesty's Ecclesiastical Commission. I especially objected to that clause which limits plurality to benefices within ten miles of each other. It was urged as a reason for this provision, that it would reduce the number of pluralities almost to nothing. I believe so; and, therefore, I would much rather reduce them quite to nothing—I would rather prohibit them altogether, than retain the scandal, and lose all the utility of the practice.

What then? would I do nothing? would I have no restraint on pluralities? Far from it. I would look, anxiously look, for some less invidious mode of supplying probationary stations; and, if one were found, I would then gladly concur in the entire abolition of pluralities. Meanwhile, retaining the practice in such measure as is useful, I would watch jealously its tendency to abuse. At present, I firmly believe, it works usefully. I would wish, therefore, to leave it as it is, till some fit substitute be provided. Public opinion has restrained, and is restraining, the practice. In this diocese alone, there has been a decrease in the number of pluralities, within the last few years, to a very great extent; certainly, for every one new in-

stance of plurality created, there have been extinguished at least three.

After all, the real and great evil to be prevented is, the leaving parishes without any resident minister. Now, this evil, which has never, I believe, been severely felt in our own diocese, is lessening as fast as is practicable. At my last visitation, out of between six and seven hundred benefices, there were seventy having no resident minister; there are now only forty-nine, and these, for the most part, of very small population, or of very peculiar circumstances. In several, indeed, the non-residence is merely nominal, the Clergyman residing close to the parish, though not within its limits.

I must add, that there are no fewer than sixty parishes, in which the incumbents are now resident, who were not resident in 1833.

VII. There remains one other legislative measure, on which I would say a very few words; the bill which passed the House of Lords, and has been suspended in the Commons, 'for more effectually enforcing Discipline over delinquent Clergymen.' The provisions of this bill, had it passed into a law, though perhaps not free from all objection, would, I confidently believe, have been found to present an adequate remedy to the most crying practical grievance existing in our Church polity,—the enormous difficulty, delay, and cost, in prosecuting delinquent Clergymen. There are few evils which all among us have long been so anxious to remedy; because from scarcely any other has so much scandal arisen to the Church. Indeed, that the present state of the law in this particular has not been found absolutely intolerable, must be attributed to a cause, for which we cannot be too

thankful to God, the paucity of cases in which such criminal proceedings have been necessary.

So much for the important matters, relative to the Church, which have occupied the attention of the Legislature in the present year.

Before I conclude, I should not satisfy either your feelings or my own, if, in meeting you in this solemn way, I did not address to you some observations respecting the duties of our ministerial and pastoral charge. But without launching on a general exposition of those duties, I think it may be more useful to confine my observations to a single, but very important, particular,—a particular, however, of which, important as it is (peculiarly so, I deem it, in the present state of religious sentiments in this country), we have all, I fear, been too neglectful. I mean, the obligation of instructing the people in the real nature of Christ's Church, and the duties resulting from it both to the Ministers and to the people.

That the notions of many good men, and sincere Christians, are on this subject extremely lax—caused, in the great majority of instances, by ignorance, or want of due consideration—is too notorious to need any proof. Let me entreat you, therefore, to turn your thoughts, and occasionally your exhortations, in this direction.

Remind your people, that salvation being deliverance from the natural state of man, man has not only no natural claim, but no natural power of attaining, to it. It is, throughout, a gift of grace, a free gift of God, to be received from God, in the way of God's own appointment. Now, Christ has declared himself to be 'the way;' and He instituted a body, His Church, of which He is the Head; that they who are

'found in Him,' members of his body, the Church, might be in 'the way of salvation.'

Remind your people, that it is to this body that the promises of the Gospel are made; and therefore it is of incalculable moment to every one who hopes for a share in these promises, to ascertain whether he belongs, and is faithful, to the body to which they are made:—whether, too, he seeks them in the ordinances to which they are annexed, and from the appointed ministers of those ordinances.

In order to this, remind them, that the Church is a *visible* body, into which its members are admitted by a visible sign, the sacrament of the new life; that in baptism is regeneration: without it, we have no warrant of Scripture to affirm that the new birth takes place at all;—without it, we are yet in our sins—in a state of spiritual death, of enmity with God, and of fellowship with the arch-enemy in his hatred, and in its everlasting punishment.

And not only is the entrance into the Church by a visible sign, but that body is visible also in the appointed means of sustaining the new life, especially in that most sacred and sublime mystery of our religion, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the commemorative sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ, in which the action and suffering of our great High Priest are represented, and offered to God on earth, as they are continually by the same High Priest himself in heaven; the Church on earth doing, after its measure, the same thing as its Head in heaven; Christ in heaven presenting the sacrifice, and applying it to its purposed end, properly and gloriously; the Church on earth commemoratively and humbly, yet really and effectually, by praying to God (with

thanksgiving) in the virtue and merit of that sacrifice which it thus exhibits.

And not only is the Church visible in this its highest act of worship, but also in common and public prayer: for we are commanded 'with one mind and one mouth to glorify God *.' We are commanded, too, 'not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together †.' And it is to the Church that our Lord has promised that 'Where two or three are gathered together in his name, he is in the midst of them ‡.'

Remind your people that the Church is visible in its rulers and its ministers; for they only can claim to rule over the Lord's household whom He has himself placed over it; they only are able to minister the means of grace,—above all, to present that great commemorative sacrifice—whom Christ has appointed, and whom He has in all generations appointed in unbroken succession from those, and through those, whom he first ordained. 'Ambassadors from Christ' must, by the very force of the term, receive credentials from Christ: 'Stewards of the mysteries of God' must be intrusted with those mysteries by Him.

Remind them, that in the Church only is the promise of forgiveness of sins; and, though to all who truly repent, and sincerely believe, Christ mercifully grants forgiveness; yet He has, in an especial manner, empowered his ministers to declare and pronounce to his people the absolution and remission of their sins. 'Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained §.' This was the awful authority given to his first

* Rom. xv. 6. † Heb. x. 25. ‡ Matt. xviii. 20.
§ John xx. 23.

ministers, and in them, and through them, to all their successors. This is the authority which we have received, and which we must never be afraid, nor ashamed, to tell the people that we have received. Not that we hereby claim a right to lord it over the conscience of our flock, to demand a disclosure of the secrets of men's hearts. We bid them confess their sins, not to us, but to God. But when they have so confessed, if their confession is accompanied with hearty repentance, our Lord has enabled his ministers to pronounce to his people *His* pardon: not merely to *preach* to them, that *if* they repent, they *will* be forgiven, but also to pronounce to them his full and free absolution from all their sins. They, therefore, who are conscious to themselves of having hearty repentance, which cannot subsist without true faith, a confident reliance on their Saviour's merits, and on the efficacy of his ordinances,—all such may have, and are invited to have, the comfort of knowing, that God's forgiveness is actually delivered to them by the mouth of his ministers, by the mouth of them to whom Christ 'hath given the ministry of reconciliation,' 'and hath committed the word of reconciliation *.'

Having shown to the people your commission, show to them how our own Church has framed its services in accordance with that commission. Show this to them not only in the Ordinal, but also in the Collects, in the Communion Service, in the Office of Visitation of the Sick — show it, especially, in that which continually presents itself to their notice, but is commonly little regarded by them—show it in the very commencement of Morning and Evening Prayer, and make them understand the full blessedness of

* 2 Cor. v. 18, 19.

that service, in which the Church thus calls on them to join. Let them see, that there the minister authoritatively pronounces God's pardon and absolution to all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe Christ's Holy Gospel—that he does this, even as the Apostles did, with the authority and by the appointment of our Lord himself; who, in commissioning his Apostles, gave this to be the never-failing assurance of his co-operation in their ministry, 'Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*'—a promise which, of its very nature, was not to be fulfilled to the persons of those whom he addressed, but to their office—to their successors, therefore, in that office, 'even unto the end of the world.' Lastly, remind and warn them of the awful sanction with which our Lord accompanied his mission, even of the second order of the ministers whom he appointed,—'He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth Him that sent me †.'

If, when you thus state the nature of the visible Church, and the privileges and blessings which are assured to those who are admitted into it—if you are asked, as doubtless you will be asked,—What then becomes of those who are not, or continue not, members of that Church? tell your inquirers that you 'judge not them that are without'—that to their own Master they stand or fall—that God's arm is not shortened, nor his mercy straitened, no, not by ministries or ordinances which He has himself appointed. But tell them, too, that he who wilfully, and in despite of due warning, or through recklessness and worldly-mindedness, sets at nought those

* Matt. xxviii. 20. † Luke x. 16.

ordinances and despises those ministers, has no right to promise to himself any share in the grace which they are appointed to convey.

Be not, I repeat, afraid nor ashamed thus to assert the true authority of your ministerial office. But, in order that ye be neither afraid nor ashamed to do this, be ye yourselves always impressed, profoundly impressed, with an abiding sense of the awful responsibility, which thence is laid upon you, to be 'workers together with God*,' to 'watch for the souls' of your people, 'as they that must give account †.'

Such, indeed, must always be the effect of serious contemplation of the dignity of your high calling. No minister of Christ can duly meditate on the nature of his office—much less can he magnify that office to others—without feeling himself deeply abased in doing it. 'Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful ‡.' Be ye, I beseech you, be ye faithful. Show by your doctrine—but not by your doctrine only, show by your lives and conversation—that you are faithful: show by your industry, your zeal, your meekness and humbleness of heart, your abandonment of self, your devotion of all your faculties to God's service in the salvation of men—show that you know and feel 'into how weighty an office and charge ye are called; that is to say, to be messengers, watchmen, and stewards of the Lord; to teach and to premonish, to feed and to provide for the Lord's family; to seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children who are in the midst of this naughty world, that they may be saved through Christ for ever. And see that you never cease your labour, your care, and diligence,

* 2 Cor. vi. 1. † Heb. xiii. 17.
‡ 1 Cor. iv. 2.

until you have done all that lieth in you, according to your bounden duty, to bring all such as are, or shall be, committed to your charge, unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among you, either for error in religion or for viciousness in life.'

And may Almighty God, who hath, I fervently hope, given you the mind to do all these things, give you also strength and power to perform the same, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

FINIS.

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